

Northside Neighbor

Connect Atlanta plan moves forward

By Cathy Johnson Neighbor Newspapers Staff Writer

Some Buckhead residents are still questioning whether a Connect Atlanta plan will ease current traffic problems and help control future growth.

At Connect Atlanta's Sept. 8 public meeting at Peachtree United Methodist Church in Buckhead, residents heard final draft recommendations based on comments from advisory committees, neighborhood planning units, City Council members and the general public at meetings held over the past year.

One problem addressed was the east-west traffic and transportation issue where volumes of vehicles come into and out of Buckhead from surrounding counties for either work or social reasons.

"The growing volume of traffic is destroying the quality of life of some of our neighborhoods, with heavy traffic along West Paces Ferry Road, Powers Ferry Road and Roswell Road," Gordon Certain, president of North Buckhead Civic Association, said in a prepared statement.

Many in the audience agreed, citing experiences of getting children to school during rush-hour traffic and being frustrated while trying to get around Buckhead during the day.

The Connect Atlanta plan calls for 16 miles of new transit and 10 lane miles of new streets.

"The area will be redeveloped to make a network of bike paths and comprehensive sidewalk areas near schools, so the area will serve as a work and play center," said Paul Moore, a project manager for Connect Atlanta who gave the presentation to about 100 residents.

One area of discussion was a proposed light-rail subway tunnel running under Buckhead neighborhoods.

Certain, one of the proponents of this traffic solution, believes a subway will provide a connection for Cobb residents who work in Buckhead.

"I have proposed a light-rail subway tunnel deep under Buckhead neighborhoods," he said.

"This small diameter tunnel would be in deep rock far under the neighborhoods and would be for electric trains only, not for automobiles and trucks."

Connect Atlanta researched the options, but recommended not building the subway tunnel because it would be cost prohibitive.

"Our projected cost for light rail would be \$40 million per mile and the subway tunnel would cost \$230 million per mile," said Moore.

Ideas presented were for a 4-mile tunnel to run along the Interstate 75 corridor or for a five-mile tunnel to run into Buckhead from the Marietta Boulevard corridor.

Connect Atlanta's citywide plan calls for improvements in transit, sidewalks, streets and bike paths while preparing for growth, preserving neighborhoods and creating a desirable place for all citizens to work and play. Total cost projections from 2009 until 2030, the proposed year of completion, is between \$3.3 billion and \$6 billion.

After September meetings are held throughout the city, final recommendations will be prepared and the project will be submitted to City Council in October.

For a complete overview of the recommendations, visit www.connectatlantaplan.com.